

# Kenyon College

## Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange

---

Four Valleys Archive

Anthropology

---

1988

## PVN-099-Excavation Report

Edward Schortman  
[schortma@kenyon.edu](mailto:schortma@kenyon.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital.kenyon.edu/honduras>



Part of the [Archaeological Anthropology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Schortman, Edward, "PVN-099-Excavation Report" (1988). *Four Valleys Archive*. Paper 69655.  
<https://digital.kenyon.edu/honduras/69655>

This Excavation Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Anthropology at Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Four Valleys Archive by an authorized administrator of Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact [noltj@kenyon.edu](mailto:noltj@kenyon.edu).

## Site 99

Site 99 consists of seven buildings covering an area of ca. 2,400m<sup>2</sup>. Structures 99-3 through 99-7 define a patio on all sides at the southern edge of the settlement. The space they enclose covers 195m<sup>2</sup>. The largest edifices at the site, Strs. 99-1 and 99-2, stretch in a line for 37m north of the patio group. Site 99 is about 1km west of the town and site of Naco, being located across the Rio Naco from that settlement. Investigation of the settlement consisted of digging trenches into the south side of Str. 99-1, the west flank of Str. 99-2, along with seven test pits that were sunk in areas lying north of the surface-visible architecture. In all, about 25m<sup>2</sup> were excavated here from April 14-20, 1988, the work being overseen by J. Miller.

## Structure 99-1

Structure 99-1 is the northernmost building that is visible at the settlement; it is also the largest platform identified here. The structure is about 2.5m tall and lies 10m north of Structure 99-2 and 25m north of Str. 99-5, the building that closes off the southern patio's north side. Digging here within Subop. 99B exposed 5.6m<sup>2</sup> and reached a maximum depth of 1.5m below modern ground surface south and outside of construction; the edifice's fill was not investigated. This work revealed one building phase.

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Dates
1	-	-	S.3	-	
2	Str. 99-1-1 <sup>st</sup>	U.1	-	-	
3	-	-	S.1-3	F.1	

## Time Span 1

The earliest activity for which we have evidence in Str. 99-1's vicinity is the deposition of at least 0.1m of a brown clay (S.3) that contains numerous pebbles and pottery fragments (S.3's base was not encountered). As S.3's deposition resumed during TS.3 it is difficult to determine how much of this soil was laid down now. The 0.1m figure is based on the disposition of fallen architectural debris (F.1) which, we presume, came to rest on or near the ground surface that was exposed during Str. 99-1's occupation. The recovery of cultural material from lower S.3 hints at human occupation in the area prior to the erection of Str. 99-1-1<sup>st</sup>.

## Time Span 2

The sole portion of Str. 99-1-1<sup>st</sup> that we exposed is what looks to have been the basal riser (U.1) of a step or terrace that fronted the platform on its south side. Unit 1 was exposed for 1m running at an approximate orientation of 269 degrees. The riser is 0.7m tall and at least 0.51m wide (its north edge was not uncovered). Unit 1 is made of river-worn stones set in two courses and bound together with a mud mortar.

### Time Span 3

Following Str. 99-1-1<sup>st</sup>'s abandonment deposition of S.3 resumed, eventually accumulating to a maximum thickness of 0.6m where it overlaps and covers U.1. Stratum 2, a gray clay containing many small pebble, covers S.3 by 0.3-0.6m and is blanketed in turn by 0.08-0.12m of a similar soil (S.1) that is distinguished by its darker gray-brown color. Embedded in S.1, 2, and upper 3 is a moderately dense concentration of rocks that fell from final-phase architecture (F.1). Feature 1 was traced for 4m south of U.1.

### Structure 99-2

Structure 99-2, which stands ca. 2m tall, is about 10m south of Str. 99-1 and 7m north of Str. 99-7. The latter closes off the northeast corner on the southern patio. The investigation of Str. 99-2 took the form of a trench (Subop. 99C) that was dug into the building's west side. Excavations here cleared 5.6m<sup>2</sup> and reached a maximum depth of 1.6m below modern ground surface outside construction (Str. 99-2-1<sup>st</sup>'s architectural fill was not probed). One building phase was revealed in the course of this work.

### Time Spans

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Dates
1	-	-	S.4	-	
2	Str. 99-2-1 <sup>st</sup>	U.1	-	-	
3	-	-	S.1-3	F.1	

### Time Span 1

The first activity attested to in Str. 99-2-1<sup>st</sup>'s environs was the deposition of at least 0.09m of a gray, ashy soil mottled with carbon flecks and containing numerous pottery fragments (S.4). Stratum 4 was only exposed for 1m west of the sole architectural unit exposed in Subop. 99C (U.1) and its base was not revealed. Given S.4's high ash content and dense concentration of sherds it seems likely that it is the uppermost portion of a trash deposit that runs under U.1.

### Time Span 2

Excavations in Subop. 99C uncovered what appears to have been the basal riser (U.1) of a step or terrace that fronted Str. 99-2-1<sup>st</sup> on the west. Unit 1 was 0.4m high and was exposed for 1m over which distance it was aligned roughly 5 degrees. The full width of this construction was not revealed; it was traced for 0.12m to the east when excavations stopped.

### Time Span 3

Following Str. 99-2-1<sup>st</sup>'s abandonment the building was first covered in part by an orange-gray clay (S.3) that blanketed U.1 by 0.34m. Stratum 3 was, in turn, covered by 0.28-0.6m of a gray clay (S.2). Covering S.2 by as much as 0.14m is a hard-compacted gray topsoil (S.1). Embedded in S.1-3 is a moderately dense concentration of rocks that had tumbled from TS.2 architecture (F.1). Feature 1 was traced for 4.4m west of U.1.

### Test Pits

All seven of the test pits dug at Site 99 measure 1x2m and are oriented roughly due north-south. They were placed north of Site 99's visible architecture in areas where A. Wonderley reported finding Preclassic ceramics in surface collections he made during his research at the site of Naco in 1977 and 1979. These tests were dug to see if we could enlarge the collection of early materials (i.e., pre-Late Classic) which, by 1988, were still sparsely represented in our excavated samples from the Naco valley. We also hoped to contextualize these surface finds, tying them with the features from which they derived or with which they were associated.

### Suboperation 99D

Suboperation 99D is located about 170m northwest of Str. 99-1, 7m west of Suboperation 99G, and 9m southwest of Subop. 99E. Digging here reached a maximum depth of 0.67m below modern ground surface. No distinctive cultural features were revealed in the course of this work.

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Dates
1	-	-	S.3	-	
2	-	-	S.1, 2	-	

### Time Span 1

The earliest activity attested to in the excavation was the deposition of at least 0.24m of a very hard-packed orange clay (S.3) that contained small pebbles (S.3's base was not encountered in Subop. 99D). Stratum 3 rises 0.04m over the 2m it was exposed running from north-to-south. The absence of artifacts in S.3 suggests that there was, at best, a sparse human occupation in the area when this soil was deposited.

### Time Span 2

Fully 0.27-0.43m of a hard-compacted, grayish-orange clay (S.2) blankets S.3. Stratum 2 contains small rocks measuring up to 0.03-0.04m in diameter along with artifacts, primarily pottery sherds. A darker orange-gray clay topsoil (S.1), in turn, covers S.2 by 0.08-0.1m. Strata 1 and 2 are identical in most aspects save that the former has a darker orange hue than the latter.

### Suboperation 99E

Suboperation 99E is 9m northeast of Subop. 99D, 1m west of Subop. 99J, and 0.5m south of Subop. 99I. Digging here reached a maximum depth of 0.97m below modern ground surface. One possible construction, F.1, was revealed in the course of this work.

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Dates
1	-	-	S.4	-	
2	-	-	S.3	F.1	
3	-	-	S.1, 2	-	

### Time Span 1

The first event identified in Subop. 99E is the laying down of at least 0.4m of an orange clay (S.4) in which are embedded small pebbles (S.4's base was not encountered). These rocks are concentrated at the top of the level but are still found in lower densities throughout the exposed portion of the stratum. No artifacts were found in S.4

### Time Span 2

Stratum 4's upper surface remains flat over the 1.2m it was exposed running south of the north trench wall. For the remaining 0.8m the top of this earth layer drops continuously for 0.22m to the south. This declivity may mark the north edge of a pit (F.1) that extends beyond our excavation limits on the south. A lens composed of gray earth (S.3) in which are concentrated numerous small pebbles fills F.1, its top being level with the uppermost margin of S.3 on the north. The behavioral significance of S.3, if any, is unclear. No artifacts were found in S.3 or F.1.

### Time Span 2

Covering S.3 and 4 is 0.43m of a hard-packed orange-gray clay that contains pebbles and numerous artifacts. Stratum 3 is blanketed by 0.11m of a very similar soil (S.1) that was distinguished by is darker orange color.

### Suboperation 99F

At 9.1m north of Subop. 99I, Subop. 99F is the northernmost trench dug at Site 99 during the 1988 field season. Digging here reached a maximum depth of 1.02m below modern ground surface and revealed no clear cultural features.

Time	Construction
------	--------------

<u>Span</u>	<u>Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	-	-	S.3-5	-	
2	-	-	S.1-2	-	

#### Time Span 1

The basal soil unit revealed in these excavations consists of a loosely compacted orange sand (S.5). Stratum 5 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.1m before excavation ceased. Covering S.5 by 0.4-0.48m is a very hard-compacted orange clay that contains many very small stones (S.4). Stratum 4, in its turn, is blanketed by 0.14-0.23m of a hard-compacted grayish-orange soil that is distinguished by the high density of small pebbles that it contains. Strata 4 and 5's upper surfaces are more-or-less even over the 2m they were exposed north-south. The upper margin of S.3 ascends 0.08m over 0.6m south-to-north before leveling out for the remaining 1.4m that it was revealed on the north. None of these earth layers yielded cultural materials.

#### Time Span 2

Stratum 3 is covered by 0.15-0.22m of a hard-compacted orange-gray clay (S.2) that contains some small rocks and cultural material. This layer was subsequently blanketed by 0.07-0.12m of a very similar soil (S.1) that is set apart from its predecessor by its darker orange-gray color and concentration of many small roots.

#### Sunboperation 99G

Suboperation 99G is 7m east of Subop. 99D and 7m south of Subop. 99J. Digging here reached a maximum depth of 0.86m below modern ground surface and revealed no clear cultural features.

#### Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	-	-	S.3	-	
2	-	-	S.1-2	-	

#### Time Span 1

The earliest activity attested to in Subop. 99G was the deposition of at least 0.4m of a very hard-compacted, orange clay in which were embedded a light scattering of small rocks (S.3). Stratum 3's base was not encountered and was found to contain no cultural materials in the area that we investigated. The upper surface of S.3 was more-or-less flat over the 2m it was exposed running north-south.

### Time Span 2

Stratum 3 was buried by 0.37m of a very hard-packed, gray-orange clay (S.2) that contained a few pebbles. A small number of artifacts was recovered from the upper parts of S.2, that number declining rapidly with greater depth. Like its predecessor, S.2 maintained a relatively flat upper surface within the 2m it was exposed running north-south.

Stratum 2 was, in turn, covered by 0.1m of a very similar soil (S.1) that was distinguished by its darker orange-gray hue and the presence of many shallow roots within it. Artifacts were recovered from S.1.

### Suboperation 99H

Suboperation 99H is 7.3m northeast of Subop. 99G and 6.5m southeast of Subop. 99J. Digging here reached a maximum depth of 1.2m below modern ground surface and revealed the enigmatic remnants of one cultural feature (F.1).

### Time Spans

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Date
1	-	-	S.4	-	
2	-	-	-	F.1	
3	-	-	S.2, 3	-	
4	-	-	S.1	-	

### Time Span 1

The earliest activity attested to within Subop. 99H was the deposition of at least 0.27m of an orange sand that contains very few pebbles (S.4). Stratum 4 was traced for 2m north-to-south over which it rose 0.09m in the latter direction. The base of this soil level was not revealed. Some artifacts were found within S.4.

### Time Span 2

A lens of gray, carbon-rich ash (F.1) containing a few small rocks was found embedded in the top of S.4. Feature 1 measures 0.6m north-south and is maximally 0.15m thick, the feature projecting 0.1m below the top of S.4. The ash and artifacts found in F.1 point to its cultural origin while its clearly delimited margins hint that it resulted from activities conducted in the feature's immediate vicinity. It

may be that F.1 constitutes the remains of a small pit in which a fire once burned or into which the results of such burning were deposited.

#### Time Span 3

Feature 1 and S.4 were now blanketed by 0.72-0.84m of an orange-gray clay (S.2). A lens of a hard-compacted grayish-orange clay containing some pebbles (S.3) projects 1.04m north into S.2 from the excavation's south margin. Stratum 3 is 0.46m thick at its southernmost exposed edge, narrowing to a point on its north terminus. The recovery of cultural materials from these strata point to a human occupation in the area while they were accumulating.

#### Time Span 4

Stratum 1, a hard-compacted, orange-gray clay topsoil, covers S.2 by 0.1m. As with its predecessor, S.1 does contain some artifacts.

#### Suboperation 99I

Suboperation 99I is 0.5m north of Subop. 99E and 1.5m northwest of Subop. 99J. Digging here reached a maximum depth of 0.98m below modern ground surface and was designed to see if the relatively dense concentration of artifacts uncovered in Subop. 99E continued to the north. By the evidence found in Subop. 99I, they did not.

#### Time Spans

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Date
1	-	-	S.3	-	
2	-	-	S.1, 2	-	

#### Time Span 1

Deposition of at least 0.43m of a very hard-compacted, orange clay with very small pebbles (S.3) was the first activity identified within Subop. 99I. The base of S.3 was not identified. This soil layer's upper surface is relatively level over the 2m it was exposed running north-south. No artifacts were recovered from the stratum.

#### Time Span 2

Stratum 3 was covered by 0.35-0.4m of a hard-packed, orange-gray clay (S.2) that contains a few pebbles and a scattering of artifacts. As was the case with its predecessor, S.2 was more-or-less level,



ascending 0.04m over 2m from south-to-north. Stratum 1, distinguished by its darker gray-orange hue, covers S.2 by 0.1m.

#### Suboperation 99J

Suboperation 99J is 1m east of Subop. 99E and 1.5m southeast of Subop. 99I. Excavations here were intended to trace the moderately dense artifact concentration recognized in Subop. 99E to the east. In this instance, as opposed to the case with Subop. 99I, signs of that deposit were found. Digging here reached a maximum depth of 0.74m below modern ground surface.

#### Time Span

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Date
1	-	-	S.3	-	
2	-	-	S1, 2	-	

#### Time Span 1

It was during this interval that at least 0.21m of a very hard-packed orange clay (S.3) was deposited. Stratum 3 contains numerous small, mostly white, pebbles but yielded no artifacts. The base of this stratum was not encountered. Stratum 3's upper surface was more-or-less flat over the 2m it was exposed running north-south.

#### Time Span 2

Stratum 3 was blanketed by 0.48m of a hard-packed, orange-gray clay (S.2). Stratum 2 contained a few small stones along with a moderately dense concentration of artifacts, mostly pottery sherds. As with S.3, S.2's upper surface was fairly flat over the 2m it was exposed north-south.

Covering S.2 is 0.1m of a very similar soil that is set apart from S.2 by its relatively darker hue and concentration of small roots (S.1).